

The Corrector of Destinies

Being Tales of Randolph Mason as Related by His Private Secretary, Courtland Parks

THE DANSEUSE

By Melville Davisson Post

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By far the most interesting client that ever called upon Randolph Mason was St. George Fairfield Porter. I do not put this superiority upon any one predominating feature; in point of dignified manner, in point of physical impressiveness, in point of courtly presentation of his case, he was easily first. He came attended by a retinue, like a maharaja. He gave no personal attention to Randolph Mason beyond a certain stolid observation cast in entering equally upon the rows of leather book-backs, upon Pietro, upon the glittering ink-stand on the table. Like a maharaja, he conducted his relations with others through skillful attendants waiting constantly on his person. One spoke to him—a sort of regent. One in white, a servant of an upper order, saw constantly that no profane hand touched him, and another, of a lower caste, waited at the door with various articles of portable luggage.

He held, above all persons of my knowledge, decided contempt for custom. I remember that he hunched during the interview, that he pressed without restraint his annoyance at a beam of light which struck him through an open shutter, and once he sang monotonously the fore words of a ditty with endless repetition, like one comfortably at leisure dwelling on a thought that pleased him. Something of his dress ought, doubtless, to be described. He wore a sort of yellow sandal, disclosing white hose ending four inches above on his fat leg, a plaid frock, a coat hand-embroidered in white silk, a hat buttoned together, having a baggy crown, a drooping rim—all of French make. In his right hand he carried a dog-whip, although there was nowhere under his left elbow, a man in minute ally named—“as I presently observed—“most curiously, How de-do,” and more curiously, I thought, referred to by his master as a “baby.”

Now I admit here upon this record the superiority of St. George Fairfield Porter in all qualities deemed excellent among men; but in the matter of sight I am as good as any of God's creatures, and my gorge rises at the word baby applied to such a beast as this How-de-do. There was never on this earth a more debauched, evil-featured thug of middle age. The worst scoundrel in three alien races were hideously mixed in him. The negro kink in his hair spoke of “long pig” eaten harkaw by camp fires on the Congo; his puffy, cruel, Turkish face, of ghastly writhing sacks cut out of calico windows into the Bosphorus; his slim Mexican body, deformed at the extremities, of good priests buried alive to the chin in the slime of the Viceroy, their faces smeared with honey that the flies might devour them. If at the last door-post, by reason of my sins, I am to meet the devil, I pray that he may not come upon me in the mortal habiliments of this How-de-do. I may now the larger uses for the dog-whip.

St. George Fairfield Porter was perhaps two years old. He came accompanied by his mother, a nurse and a lesser servant. This mother was a woman whose face impressed me; it bore record of disaster without attendant hardening of lines, rather the face seemed cleansed by misfortune, as a plate passed through acid. She spoke directly, without coloring her words, without restraint and without apology, as one speaks to the surgeon before he strips for the knife. She did not desire sympathy or verbal consolation. She wished merely that Randolph Mason should have the object of her visit laid clearly before him. She had consulted with an eminent attorney in New York, who had sent word to him, the practicing physician, to see the difficult case to the expert.

She was born in New York city, and had been married three years before to Charles Porter, an iron-broker of that city. This man was a progressive, brilliant fellow. He had risen swiftly from a subordinate position, partly by reason of his excellent address, but chiefly because he was the most practical authority in America on the manufacture of pig-iron.

The era of industrial consolidation arrived about the time of this marriage, and Charles Porter was the first in the east to step into the open door. He swiftly got optional control of the iron mill whose product he was accustomed to sell, and materially assisted to bring the larger business into one gigantic combine under a New York charter. This tremendous, giddy rise was the man's ruin. Shot upward almost in a night from the status of a middleman to a position of authority in one of the greatest consolidated industries of the world, he was wrenched violently loose from every moral safeguard. He adopted, as an essential element of this new station, the glittering dress with which he was now surrounded.

A certain oriental, speaking from rare knowledge of human nature, feared that with riches one would forget God. Had he been a monogamist, he would equally have feared the forgetting of one's wife and God. So long as a man can with difficulty carry out his own plan of life he is apt to conduct himself as an honorable citizen. Set on an instant where many paths are open, he is equally apt to plunge

recklessly into every possible experience. The American lacked the foresight of King David; within a year he had started a continent by his gambling at Monte Carlo; he had been fined in every city of Italy for the reckless driving of motor cars; he had been publicly ejected from the Moulin Rouge for excesses passing even the elastic standard of Paris.

On his way of riot he came under the eye of a Viennese danseuse, Suzanne Kinaky, a creature with the alluring person of a dryad and the hard, practical mind of an iron-master. She attached herself instantly to this floating gold-pot. In the gaslit region of Cocksaigne, the American was no equal of this experienced adventuress; she had come up from the obscenity, reeking tars of it; she knew with hideous certainty what fate awaited poverty and the loss of youth in that tinsel kingdom. Like every woman of her class, arrived at a certain age, she determined to secure at any cost a permanent fortune and a footing in the world of respectability above her. The coming of this rich western licentiate was a direct answer to Satanic invocations.

After this fatal meeting, the American traveled through the south of Europe like the Fifteenth Louis, the dividends of the second greatest business in the world slipping through the fingers of the American. In the face of convincing private advice and the lurid public reports brought glancingly to her attention. Even the man's divorce and subsequent marriage induced no word of comment or censure from the lips of this remarkable woman.

The end was not far to seek. Recalled to America by his business associates, Charles Porter repaired to New Haven, established there a constructive residence, alleged the desertion of his first wife and secured a divorce by an order of publication, immediately upon the entering of the decree he married Suzanne Kinaky and, later, returning to New York, took a country house on Long Island.

During all of this time his former wife had remained quietly with her father in New York city. Unfortunately, she could not accompany Porter on his disastrous European tour because of the high of the little boy. For a time she was absolutely loyal to the absent husband. In the face of convincing private advice and the lurid public reports brought glancingly to her attention. Even the man's divorce and subsequent marriage induced no word of comment or censure from the lips of this remarkable woman.

The spoke in the wheel of fortune to which Suzanne Kinaky had so deeply and cleverly carried her unluckily to the first realization of her hopes, went on swiftly upward. The physical machinery of Charles Porter, unused to dissipation and driven at a pace thus killing, went suddenly to pieces. Two months after his second marriage, his brain softened like a dish of porridge. He got up one afternoon from his desk in his office, dressed his feet, his mouth drooling, his speech a simian jabber. The danseuse acted with the most daring resolution. She isolated him instantly in his country house on Long Island, gave out that he would conduct his affairs from his residence and caused all his private papers, including the tin boxes in which his very securities were packed, to be removed to it. His deposits in banks were likewise immediately drawn out. His yacht, motor-cars and racing stables were sold hurriedly at auction. Suzanne Kinaky thereby got at least one-seventh of the man's estate safely into her hands while he was yet alive. The great bulk of his fortune she could not lay hands on; it was in iron and steel stocks, deposited with a trust company under an order permitting their withdrawal only upon the written direction of a syndicate committee of which Charles Porter was a member, and encumbered by a further agreement requiring them to be first offered to the members of the syndicate before being exhibited otherwise for sale. This estate was valued at, perhaps, seven millions of dollars.

The far-sighted, practical second wife was not greatly alarmed over the status of these seven millions. Every other scrap of the estate was in her possession—cash and negotiable assets aggregating, perhaps, a million dollars. One-half of these remaining six millions the law would give her at the husband's death. Porter had made no will and he was now forever incapable of executing one. These iron and steel stocks were personal property, and one-half would go to the wife should the husband die, as he was doing, without issue by the second marriage, the child of the first marriage having been provided for in the decree of divorce by a mortgage on New York future property rights. Then, what every detail was snugly arranged, she carried Charles Porter to the medical experts. They pronounced him utterly incurable, with perhaps six months to live.

The danseuse now saw the last gate barring her wildest fancies swing inward on its hinges—a great chasm in the Bavarian mountains, a palace in Vienna, a glittering court sitting through continental capitals like a fairy pageant, all rising from that six feet of earth into which this slobbering creature, who had eaten of Cereus flowers, was presently to be hidden.

Then, on the instant, as under God's

finger, that spoke in the wheel of fortune, arriving at the summit, snatched Suzanne Kinaky, looking over a New York paper at dinner one evening, read that the Supreme Court of the United States had on that day pronounced an opinion declaring invalid divorces granted upon an order of publication.

In another quarter events now began to move. The catastrophe befalling Charles Porter startled the first wife into activity. She had not cared particularly for herself, and she had all along believed that finally Porter would secure the bulk of his estate to his son. Now, stricken to her sensibility, he could not. The scarlet woman must be met with fire. There is no courage, no endurance, no tenacity comparable to that of the just, rising, at last, to action. This deserted woman went at once to an attorney and filed the matter before him. He brought forth the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States which had struck such terror to Suzanne Kinaky, and assured her that the Courts of New York would refuse to treat Porter's divorce as valid or of any effect. She would stand under the law as Porter's wife. The estate in New York would descend at his death to her and the boy. But the million dollars which the danseuse had got into her hands was certainly gone, the woman was shrewd enough for that. But the Covenant of the Puritan, was in the field now. No inch of ground should be yielded, no dollar of the child's inheritance should remain in the fingers of that woman.

Was there a chance? The eminent attorney pointed out that in the law, but that, when applied, they would all fail. This dancing adventuress would conceal, bury, spirit away Porter's portable estate. She would swear it had been given to her, lost, stolen, used by her husband, she knew not how. With legal arms there was no hope. If she wished, he would try what could be obtained by treaty. She wished it, and he did try. Nothing was gained. Suzanne Kinaky, being approached, took it for a sign of weakness and condescension, as one who would be generous, offered to pay to Mrs. Porter a million dollars provided she would not contest the decree of divorce. One million for three. In diplomatic bartering, the danseuse followed Continental masters.

The attorney presented this proof of his opinion to the client. Mrs. Porter must be content with the six million dollars. She was not content. Being denied additional counsel. These men, learned, experienced in human affairs, were of the same opinion. The money was lost. Mrs. Porter, with an unreasonable persistence, by virtue of which every woman is a client to be dreaded, refused, even over their opinions, to consider it as lost. Then, annoyed, wishing to be rid of a problem impossible of solution by any legal formula, the attorney sent her to Randolph Mason.

Thus I met St. George Fairfield Porter, seeking to regain a lost million of his inheritance under the conduct of his agent, a woman driven by that mystic, fearless, untiring instinct shared alike by the mothers of the forest.

When the story was ended, Mrs. Porter took from the bosom of her dress three folded papers and laid them on the table before Randolph Mason.

“That,” she said, “is my marriage certificate. This, a file of the divorce proceedings, and here,” her fingers pressed the document against the writing-pad as though to crush it, “is the contract which that woman had the effrontery to send with her offer of compromise.”

Mason looked casually through the court file; then he opened the contract and carefully read it, and I, standing by the table, read it also. It was a rigid agreement by which this first Mrs. Porter, in consideration of one million dollars, received from Charles Porter, agreed and bound herself not to contest or disturb the decree of divorce; and in order that the signature might not ever be questioned, it was to be acknowledged before a notary and witnessed before the clerk of a court of record under his official seal.

“You will observe,” said the woman, “that this paper is an iron-clad contract. My attorney says its terms could not be more bindingly put.”

“That is true,” replied Randolph Mason.

(To be continued.)

POOL MATCH

Will Be Played Tonight at 8 O'clock at the Metropolitan Cafe.

What will be a treat to the pool enthusiasts of the city will be the pool match tonight at 8 o'clock between Burns, champion of the Pacific coast, and an unknown at the Metropolitan cafe on Pike street. The game will be 125 balls at straight pool. After the game there will be an exhibition of fancy shots. Burns has defeated Clearwater and other noted eastern experts and is in line for championship honors, his high run being 110 balls against Clearwater.

CHICAGO GRAIN MARKET.

CHICAGO, Sept. 9.—September wheat closed 90 1-8; corn 82; oats 32.

CLOSING

Orders of the September Term of the Criminal Court Are Entered.

Among the closing orders of the September term of the circuit court to and today are the following:

Rosa M. McKeehan, trading and doing business as the McKeehan Brick Works, against Bessie Lyon et al., decree of sale.

Southern Pine Lumber Company against Frederick W. Gilbert et al., order of reference.

Oliver L. Maple against the Harrison Barbour Coal Company, sale directed.

Sarah Golden against William Nussbaum, dismissed.

Board of Education of Freeman's Creek district against Union district, leave as Porter's wife. The estate in New York would descend at his death to her and the boy. But the million dollars which the danseuse had got into her hands was certainly gone, the woman was shrewd enough for that. But the Covenant of the Puritan, was in the field now. No inch of ground should be yielded, no dollar of the child's inheritance should remain in the fingers of that woman.

A. M. Cunningham against Henrietta H. Duff et al., dismissed.

Gerald N. Smith against Sheridan R. Griffin, dismissed.

P. Welty against Duff and Hart, dismissed.

Pietro Mancino against Joseph Cohen et al., dismissed as to Benjamin Shuster and injunction issued against Joseph Cohen enjoining him from keeping gasoline, benzine and the like on a lot and porch on North Fourth street.

ELEVEN

Cases Are Given Attention by Mayor at Two Sessions of City Court.

Eleven cases were disposed of at this and yesterday morning's sessions of the city court by Mayor Frank R. Moore, as follows:

Cash bonds of \$11.60 each were declared forfeited at this morning's session in the cases at John Doe, Blanche Hoksarger, Samuel Thompson and Miss Large, who were arrested Sunday evening for unlawfully associating together. Another fellow paid a fine of \$5 and costs for street drunkenness.

At Sunday morning's session, Harry Landers was sentenced to serve five days in jail in default of paying a fine of \$5 and costs for drunkenness. Two other fellows paid fines of \$3 and costs for like offenses, another who was arrested for disorderly conduct forfeited a cash bond of \$11.60 and two others were deported in default of paying fines of \$3 and costs each for street drunkenness.

KOERNER BUYS

Empire Sign Company Business as Well as Empire Bulletin System.

William R. Koerner, formerly of the Pike News Company, has purchased the business and plant of the Empire Sign Company and the Empire bulletin system of Samuel I. Butters and has taken personal charge of the same. The offices will remain in the Empire building. Mr. Butters established the business there six years ago and has conducted it with great success. He will go into the real estate business. Mr. Koerner is a hustler and he will have fine success.

COMMITTEES BUSY.

DETROIT, Sept. 9.—Committees of the American Bankers Association and affiliated organizations faced much routine business today but hoped to finish in time to clear the decks for the opening of the association's national convention tomorrow.

MISS JACKSON, ROBBED.

NEW YORK, Sept. 9.—Before starting for her home in Parkersburg, W. Va., last night, Miss Lily Irene Jackson reported that she had been robbed of a bag pin containing five diamonds while a guest at the New Grand hotel. She declared the intrinsic value of the pin was \$2,000 but she prized it most because it was an heirloom.

ROOSEVELT APPEALS.

SPOKANE, Wash., Sept. 9.—Colonel Roosevelt made an appeal today to the voters of Washington to support the Progressive ticket. He reached Spokane from Montana last night and will remain in the state two days.

Carl Thornburg went to Salem Monday to spend the day looking after business matters.

MR. MARTIN

Goes to New York to Study Voice under a Noted Vocalist There.

FAIRMONT, Sept. 9.—Prof. A. W. Martin, who is at the head of the department of music at the Fairmont normal school, left Monday for a study of music in New York. Mr. Martin will be gone for three months during which time he will study with Joseph Bearstein-Regneas who in one of New York's most noted voice specialists. Mr. Martin will return to the normal December 1, at which time he will reopen his studio. During his absence from will be done by Miss Amy Rice, of Fairmont, his work at the normal the Oberlin conservatory at Oberlin, O. Miss Rice comes to Fairmont highly recommended and besides being a skilled teacher of voice is an excellent organist, having been an up-pupil for four years of Dr. George Whitman Andrews, of the Oberlin conservatory.

Melville Davisson Post the noted author, is a guest at his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Ira C. Post, at Temperance, this week.

ELKS

(Continued from page one.)

against the Clarksburg team at Bluefield last year when the Clarksburg team lost out in the ninth inning by the close score of 3 to 2.

The following men are requested to be present Tuesday for practice and the following have entered as candidates for the following positions:

Catcher, Louis A. Carr; pitchers, Fullerton, Leachman, Caulfield, Rodmigh and Fleming Holden; first base, Forrest McNeil and Charles Gill; second base, Dresbach and William Mulheran; short stop, William Mulheran and Harry Fullerton; third base Thomas Coughlin; in the outfield, Brown, Crandall, Smith, Frank Gill, Fullerton, Dresbach and Leachman. The players Tuesday will take the 4:38 street car for the grounds.

TWINS ARE BORN.

Twins were brought to the home of Mr. and Mrs. H. B. Goodwin on North Fourth street Sunday. One weighed six and one-half pounds and the other seven pounds. They are a healthy pair and give promise of being as fine meat dealers as the proud father is.

FIRST NOTICE TO CREDITORS

In the District Court of the United States for the Northern District of West Virginia.
In Re: Charles C. Burchner, Bankrupt.
IN BANKRUPTCY.
To the Creditors of Charles C. Burchner, of Clarksburg, in the County of Harrison and District aforesaid, a bankrupt:

Notice is hereby given that on the 23rd day of August, A. D., 1912, Charles C. Burchner was duly adjudicated bankrupt, and the first meeting of creditors will be held at the law office of W. Frank Stout in Clarksburg on the 17th day of September, A. D., 1912, at 10 o'clock in the forenoon, at which time said creditors may attend, prove their claims, appoint a trustee, examine the bankrupt, and transact such other business as may properly come before said meeting.

Dated, September 7th, 1912.
W. FRANK STOUT,
Referee in Bankruptcy.
WILLIAM T. GEORGE, Esq.,
Attorney for Bankrupt.

H. A. HEINZE,
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Every Voter's Duty Is

To study the issues, the platforms, the candidates, and the great questions of the hour. Every Democrat should be as familiar with the Republican and Progressive claims and men as with his own. Every Republican and Progressive should be as familiar with the Democratic claims and men as with his own. Every Socialist, Prohibitionist, Independent and Suffragist should be familiar with the claims and the principles of the other parties. It is a duty that every citizen owes to his country and to himself.

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